

LAW OFFICES OF
LOUIS ONEAL

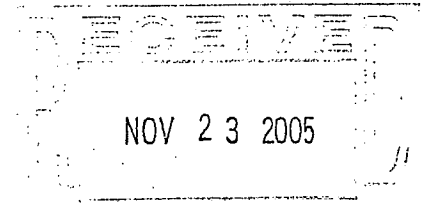
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November 21, 2005

California High Speed Rail Authority
Re: Letter input for Scoping Hearings
925 "L" Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, California 95814



Re: Isabel Valley Proposed Route

Gentlemen:

It has been suggested that if the owners of property proposed as a potential route for the High Speed Rail wish to object to the train going through their property that they should indicate the reason for their objection. I have previously objected at meetings concerning this issue, as well as in writing, but wish to again indicate the reason for the owners of the Isabel Valley Ranch's position, which is that we will do everything within our power to prevent the ruination of this pristine wilderness area.

This ranch, which was originally a Mexican Land Grant, has had remarkably few owners since the 1800's. It is, I am told, the most important piece of property in the Diablo Range from the standpoint of its location, its topography, and the abundant wild life, which depends on it for survival and procreation. I have not had the opportunity of visiting all of the property making up the Diablo Range, but I am told by environmentalists and conservation groups who have had the opportunity of visiting all of the Diablo Range that this is the most unique and important property in the entire range. Robert Stevens, who is a Board Member of the Nature Conservancy, and the husband of Julie Packard, and who has been on our ranch on several occasions, refers to the Isabel Valley as the "Yellowstone of the Diablo Range".

On two occasions in the long history of the Isabel Valley, where ownership of the area was in dispute, it was important enough to the parties who claimed ownership, that the title to the property was adjudicated by the United States Supreme Court.

The property contains a variety of artifacts left not only by the Ohlone Indians, but by the Spanish explorers led by Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, who explored the area in the 1700's. We have been fortunate enough to have retrieved some of these artifacts, such as Spanish spurs and Indian artifacts which have been studied by the Archeology Departments at San Jose State University, the University of California at Berkeley, and Stanford University. The professors of those departments have confirmed with us that there are hundreds of Indian burials which are intact on the property.

The burial grounds are not just in the valley, but are present in the mountains and canyons surrounding the valley floor.

The Isabel is home to dozens of species of wild life and bird life, which have been essentially uninterrupted for centuries. The Isabel is home to horned toads, California Newts, frogs, turtles; a variety of bees and butterflies; insects, such as ladybugs; a variety of snakes, such as rattlesnakes, gopher snakes, water snakes and king snakes; 150 different varieties of birds as counted by members of the Audubon Society, which includes osprey, golden eagle, bald eagles, caspian tern, a variety of hawks, song birds, quail, egrets, wild pigeons, morning doves, roadrunners, wild turkeys, cottontail rabbits, bush rabbits, jack rabbits, opossums, skunks, raccoons, grey foxes, red foxes, coyotes, badgers, bob cats, mountain lions, antelope, deer, tule elk, wild pigs, ground squirrels, tree squirrels, weasels, Canadian honkers, and a variety of ducks, including, Wood Ducks, Mallards, Teel, Gadwalls, Widgeon, Bluebills, Mergansers and Mud Hens. Many of these ducks and geese nest on the ranch all year long.

The property contains several lakes, which are home to and the breeding ground for fish such as large mouth bass, crappie, blue gills, catfish, crayfish, minnows and trout, including native California trout in some of the water holes in Smith Creek and in the Isabel Creek. Both of these creeks drain into the Calaveras Reservoir which is part of the Hetch Hetchy System that provides water to the City of San Francisco.

I am told by hydrologists that an aquifer is under the Isabel Valley, which provides water year round in all of the canyons on the ranch, which sustains all of the wild life and bird life on the property. I am told that this aquifer exists on water from the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I would point out that all of these animals and birds exist only 18.4 air miles from the City of San Jose, and is the most important parcel of property in the entire County providing a breeding ground for all of this bird life and wild life. To disrupt this parcel in any way would be a devastating blow to the ecology and ecco system of the Diablo Range. When I say it is the most important section of that range, I am not unmindful of the existence of Coe State Park.

The south end of the valley is significantly higher than the north end and the south end is the location of Indian Springs, which runs the entire year and flows to the north by a series of ditches which fill the largest lake on the ranch in front of our four homes.

If a roadbed were to be constructed across the valley anywhere near the location indicated on the proposed route documents

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which I have seen, it would in effect act as a dam, and would turn the Indian Springs area, if not into a lake, into a swamp. It also would greatly diminish the size of the lake in front of the houses because the existence of that lake would then be dependent upon rain water and the spring at the south end of the lake which provides drinking water to all of the houses.

In addition to these concerns, there might well be an impact on Roger Venable's property. He resides full time with his family at the southeast boundary of our ranch, which is within a quarter mile of Indian Springs.

The Isabel Valley Ranch has been in the same hands for 58 years. The owners have done a good job of maintaining the property in its original condition and are in the process of granting to the Nature Conservancy an easement over the entire property, which would insure in the years to come that it will remain an undeveloped resource for the entire Diablo Range and the birds and animals which inhabit it.

The owners of the Isabel would welcome any experts that the authority might designate to tour the ranch and confirm the facts set forth in this letter. In the interest of brevity, I have not mentioned the concerns that might well impact on the trees, flowers and grasses which the Isabel also contains.

Very truly yours,


LOUIS ONEAL

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